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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**South Carolina Approved to Implement Integrated Program to Improve outcomes
For South Carolinians receiving Medicare and Medicaid**

South Carolina signs a Memorandum of Understanding with CMS to use new approaches to better integrate care of Medicare-Medicaid enrollees.

Columbia, SC - The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) today announced that the agency has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) approving its new pilot program to provide integrated and coordinated care for individuals who are eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid. This innovative program, Healthy Connections Prime, realigns incentives so Medicare and Medicaid services can work in a single system, resulting in a simpler health care experience that improves quality, reduces costs and enhances patient satisfaction. It will transform the state's health care system to deliver patient-centered care that integrates all types of care services, including medical, behavioral health and long-term services and supports.

South Carolina received federal funding to design a service delivery model that integrates care to meet the often complex and costly medical needs of individuals who receive services from both Medicare and Medicaid, known as "dual eligibles."

"South Carolina continues to be a national leader on health reform initiatives and this federal approval marks another significant milestone for showing South Carolina's commitment to delivering quality health care to some of our most vulnerable citizens," said SCDHHS Director Tony Keck. "Currently, these patients must navigate a fragmented system to find the services they need. Through the Healthy Connections Prime program, South Carolinians will receive coordinated care and it ensures they have access to the right kind of health care services."

Dual eligibles are among the state's highest need and highest cost users of health care services. Healthy Connections Prime creates a new option for the dual eligible individuals in South Carolina. Eligible beneficiaries who enroll in the pilot program will be able to receive both Medicare and Medicaid services, plus additional behavioral health and community support services through one health plan that promotes clinically integrated, patient-centered care and improves health outcomes, delays the need for nursing facility care, reduces avoidable emergency room visits and hospital readmissions and increases access to home and community-based services.

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"People who are dually eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid often experience fragmented, uncoordinated care that can drive up cost without adding value. AARP South Carolina commends the state for working with stakeholders and the federal government to develop an ambitious and thoughtful program for integrating Medicare and Medicaid services for these individuals," said Teresa Arnold, state director of AARP SC. "Assuring access to high-quality coordinated care for dual eligibles and finding ways to control their costs without compromising consumer protections in the design, implementation and administration of this program are critical objectives for AARP. AARP South Carolina will continue to work with the state as we strive to fully achieve the promise of this initiative."

SCDHHS is preparing to serve approximately 53,600 of the dual eligible beneficiaries in this state in a fully integrated continuum of Medicare and Medicaid benefits by December 2015. The initial opt-in enrollment period begins July 1, 2014. Enrollment and participation in Healthy Connections Prime is voluntary for dual eligibles and participants may opt out at any time.

"Without the tireless efforts and support of the staff at SCDHHS, our community stakeholders and the guidance of CMS' Medicare-Medicaid Coordination Office, Healthy Connections Prime would not have come to fruition," said Keck. "This innovative program will continue SCDHHS' efforts to improve the health outcomes for all South Carolinians."

For more information about Healthy Connections Prime, please visit scdhhs.gov/prime.

About the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services provides health care benefits to more than one million South Carolinians. Its mission is to purchase the most health for our citizens in need at the least possible cost to the taxpayer.

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